

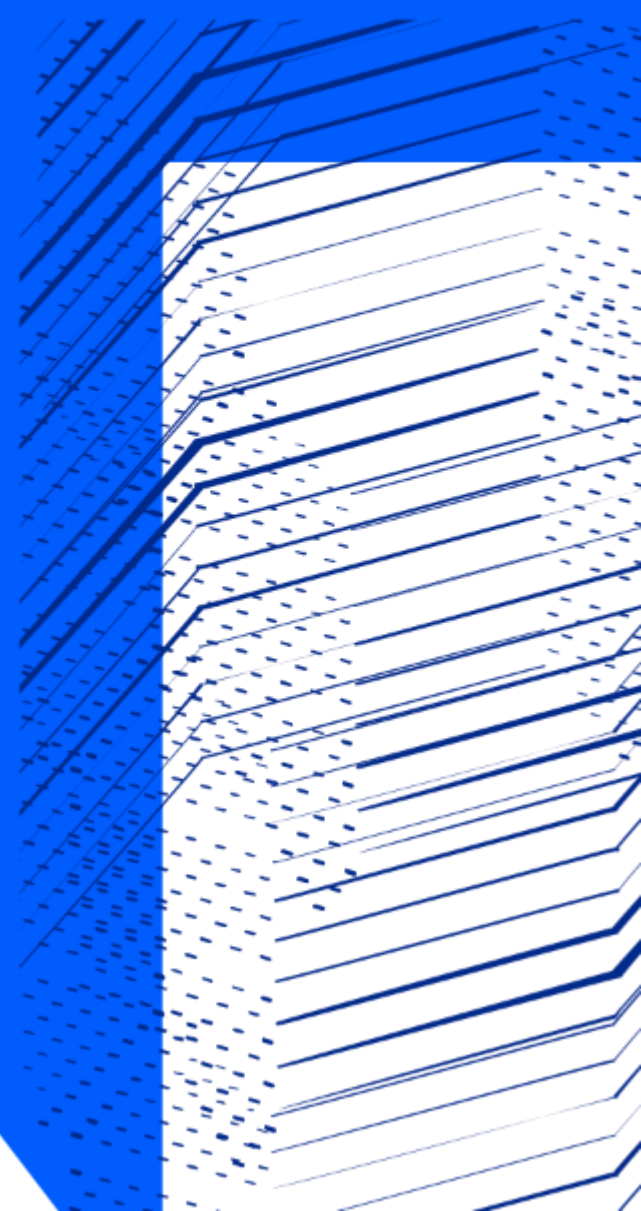


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# Particle Physics Theory Town Hall

Professor Grahame Blair  
Executive Director, Programmes

17 December 2025





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# Corporate update



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# UKRI Executive

## CEO UKRI

- Prof Sir Ian Chapman started as UKRI's CEO in August 2025
- formerly CEO of the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) and a UKRI Board member
- he is a distinguished physicist:
  - Knight in the New Year Honours List 2023 for his services to global fusion energy
  - Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering and a Fellow of the Royal Society.
  - his research has been recognised with a number of international awards
- Ian and Minister Vallance's priorities for UKRI are:
  - Guardians for curiosity driven research
  - Applying research and innovation to address government's priorities for the UK public
  - Help UK companies grow and scale



# Revised UKRI Mission

“To advance knowledge,  
improve lives and drive growth”



# STFC Council Appointments

## New Council members

- in April, we welcomed 4 new Council members:
  - Prof Andrew Pontzen, Professor of Cosmology Durham University. His research interests are the interfaces of astrophysics, high energy physics, cosmology and computation
  - Prof David Charlton, Poynting Professor of Physics at University of Birmingham. He is an experienced Particle Physicist and was previously on Science Board (PPAN)
  - Prof Jayne Lawrence, Director of University of Manchester @Harwell. Long term user of STFC facilities and a former chair of Science Board
  - Prof Stan Bentvelsen, Professor at University of Amsterdam and former director of Nikhef. He is a scientific lead on Einstein Telescope (Gravitational Waves)





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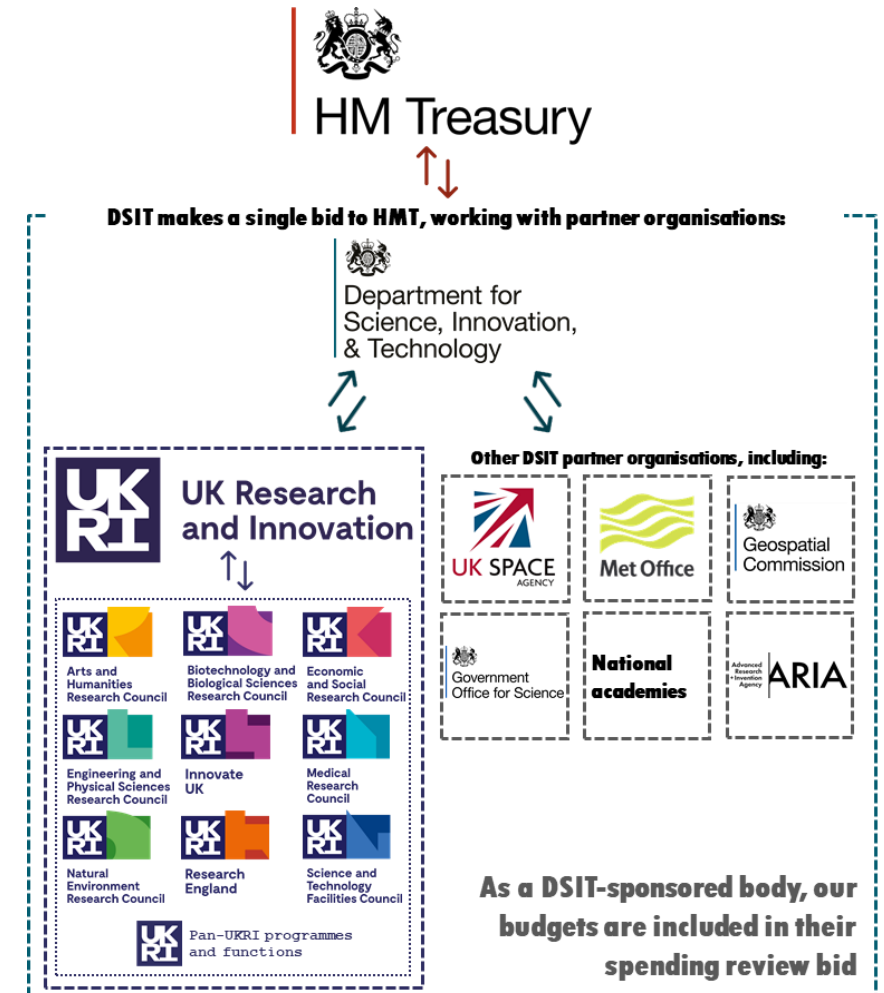
# Spending Review



# Spending Review

## Reminder on Spending Review process

- Spending Reviews (SRs) are led by HM Treasury
- STFC and the other research councils feed priorities into UKRI, who submits a collective bid into DSIT, along with other public bodies
- DSIT makes its bid into HMT, which set the department budgets and the allocation process then flows in reverse
- this Spending Review is in 2-phases:
  - Phase 1 – budgets for 2025/26 confirmed
  - Phase 2 – budgets for 2026/27-2029/30



# Spending Review – Phase 1

## Funding situation for STFC in 2025/26:

- there are significant pressures and calls on STFC's budget:
  - inflation has been significant over recent years (over 10% p.a. at times), which has not been matched by increased funding for construction/lab infrastructure
  - salaries, University overheads and student stipends have all increased
  - delays (including Covid) and technical challenges have led to increased costs in PPAN projects
  - STFC has long-term international commitments backed by MoUs and agreements
- we have had to make some difficult choices to reach a balanced budget:
  - reduced % success rate for the 2024 Astronomy and Particle Physics grants rounds
  - some projects have not been renewed or are being paused
  - we are committed to reducing STFC's fixed costs, which includes reducing operational cost and reducing headcount through a voluntary exit scheme



# Spending Review – Phase 2

## UKRI's Allocations

- on 30 October, DSIT announced a £38bn multi-year budget allocation for UKRI covering the 4-year period from 2026/27 through 2029/30
- increase in budget compared to 2025/26

FY	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
UKRI Allocation £m	8,811	9,220	9,589	9,791	9,986

- commitment provides a strong platform for UKRI to make research and innovation central to improving lives and driving growth
- figures include funding for specific activities that will deliver on behalf of DSIT, including £1.4bn of investment in Critical Technologies

# Spending Review – Phase 2

## UKRI's Allocation Priorities

- UKRI recognise the pressures facing the R&I system. This multi-year allocation is a valuable opportunity to reflect and change in response to those pressures
- UKRI is in the process of finalising its allocations to Councils and programmes, focusing on 4 areas:
  - curiosity driven research and a providing a strong foundation for HEIs
  - supporting government priorities including the industrial strategy
  - supporting companies scaling and grow
  - providing an enabling platform to support world class research in the UK
- STFC will be able to provide more information in early 2026 once the allocations process has concluded.

# STFC Transformation Programme

To ensure a sustainable future for our research communities – we:

- need to ensure we are as efficient and effective as possible, ensuring the long-term sustainability of our research communities and the labs, facilities and the campuses that sustain them
- cannot continue with everything that we currently fund, but what we do fund must be at a viable level, delivering world class research and technology.
- have launched a transformation programme – key areas include
  - STFC organisational design and how services are optimally delivered
  - science and project delivery
  - revenue generation and better alignment with the industrial strategy
- are considering longer term options. This is still under discussion and we will be working closely with all relevant stakeholders to ensure a considered approach.



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# Particle Physics Programme



# European Strategy for Particle Physics

The process for the next European Strategy for Particle Physics Update is underway

Summary of key dates & events	
31 March 2025	Deadline for submission of input from the community
23-27 June 2025	Open Symposium
Late September 2025	Submission of briefing block to ESG
14 November 2025	Deadline for final national input prior to ESG drafting session
1-5 December 2025	ESG Strategy Drafting Session
March-June 2026	Discussion of the Draft Strategy Document by CERN Council, followed by updating of the Strategy by the Council

FCC Feasibility Study released





# PP Theory CG announcement

Activity	Date
Closing date for consolidated grant proposals	19 February 2025
Reviewing process	March - April 2025
Reviewer comments available	early May 2025
Peer Review meetings	early June 2025
Science Board	September 2025
<b>Outcome announced</b>	<b>delayed</b>
<b>Grants commence</b>	<b>1 October 2026</b>

## Delay to the announcement of the PPT CGs

- Panel recommendations received positively by Science and Executive Board
- Spending Review process ongoing → not able to announce outcomes and need to consider additional scenarios
- Panel to reconvene mid-January
- we are still working towards a start date of 1 October

**We appreciate the difficult situation this puts you in and will provide updates when we can**

# Feedback & observations from the Panel

- balance of themes has been evolving over years → needs to be accepted by the community
- PPT community now operates at interface between various areas (e.g. QFT, gravitational waves, cosmology etc.)
  - going away from traditional particle collider measurements
  - orientation towards areas such as gravitational waves or cosmology
  - PPT tools used more broadly, leading to loss of clearly defined areas

**Action by Panel: balancing the 5 areas (Cosmology, String Theory, QFT, Phenomenology, Lattice Field Theory)**

## Questions for the PPT community

**How do you want to position yourself?**

**How do you want to benefit from a stronger connection to other areas?**

# Feedback & observations continued

- significant increase in number of academics & science areas
  - slight increase in ROs
  - discrepancy in size of institutions and considerable increase of some
- danger of groups stretching themselves too much to maintain collaborative and scientific strength

## Panel recommendations:

- support a community as diverse as possible with groups of all sizes
- maintain postdoctoral researcher time but reduce academic time

## Questions for the PPT community

How can you keep up collaboration levels and scientific strength?

How can you best work together as a community to explore additional funding opportunities (e.g. through a focus on technology areas such as quantum computing)?



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# The Funding Service

# Summary

- UKRI has a new CEO and will evolve in line with its new mission.
- The Spending Review is reaching its final stages and its full implications, including allocations, should be known in the New Year.
- PPT grants cannot be announced until the allocations are finalised.
- We will need to be flexible to continue to deliver the highest quality and take advantage of this changing landscape.





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# Questions?



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# Thank you



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@STFC\_Matters



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